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# LINCOLN.

An Exercise for Schools

ON THE

ANNIVERSARY

OF THE

**BIRTHDAY OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN,**

FEBRUARY 12th.

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[*From the Journal of Education, Boston, Mass.*]

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# LINCOLN.

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[*Readings* : Lincoln's Speech at the Dedication of the Cemetery at Gettysburg, and his Second Inaugural Address ; "How Blossom Helped."]

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1. Abraham Lincoln was born in what is now Larue Co., Ky., Feb. 12, 1809. His father was an improvident and uneducated man, who could barely write his own name, and that very awkwardly.

*Response.* Lincoln was strongly attached to his parents. Of his mother he said, in after-life, with tears in his eyes, "All that I am or hope to be, I owe to my angel mother,— blessings on her memory."

2. His father attributed much of his hard fortune to the lack of education, and determined to give his children the best opportunities for learning that he could.

*Response.* But all his school life, both in Kentucky and Indiana (to which State they moved when he was seven years old), was not more than a year.

3. He learned to read and write, and used to be the letter-writer for the neighborhood.

*Response.* His only books were the Bible, *Aesop's Fables*, *Pilgrim's Progress*, a Life of Washington, of Henry Clay, and of Franklin. In one of his speeches he says that when he read of the Americans at Trenton, "Boy as I was, I thought that there must have been something more than common that these men struggled for."

4. Living among the roughest of rough men, he was remarkably pure. No stimulant entered his lips, and no profanity ever came forth from them.

*Response.* A good story-teller, honest, and truthful, he was as popular wherever he lived, as afterward through the nation.

5. A man who worked with him, when a young man, says he was then the roughest-looking person he ever saw. He was tall and ungainly, with trousers made of flax and tow, tight at the ankle and out at both knees. He split rails to get clothing, and made a bargain with Mrs. Nancy Miller to split 400 rails for every yard of brown jeans dyed with white-walnut bark, that would be needed to make him a pair of trousers.

*Response.* He often, at this time, walked five, six, or seven miles to his work. While in a store in New Salem, Ill., he acquired the nickname of "Honest Abe," which clung to him through life.

RECITATION: LINCOLN.

[From the "Commemoration Ode," by James Russell Lowell.]

Life may be given in many ways,  
And loyalty to Truth be sealed  
As bravely in the closet as the field,  
So bountiful is Fate;  
But then to stand beside her,  
When craven churls deride her,  
To front a lie in arms and not to yield,  
This shows, methinks, God's plan  
And measure of a stalwart man.

Such was he, our Martyr-chief,  
Whom late the Nation he had led,  
With ashes on her head,  
Wept with the passion of an angry grief.

Nature, they say, doth dote,  
And cannot make a man  
Save on some worn-out plan,  
Repeating us by rote.

For him her Old-World moulds aside she threw,  
And, choosing sweet clay from the breast  
Of the unexhausted West,  
With stuff untainted shaped a hero new,  
Wise, steadfast in the strength of God, and true.

6. When twenty-three years of age, he served as captain in

the Black Hawk War. On his return he was nominated for the State legislature, but failed of election.

*Response.* About this time he was made postmaster. The office was too small to be made a political prize, and it was given him because everybody liked him and because he was the only man willing to take it who could make out the returns.

7. He was pleased with the appointment, because it gave him a chance to read every newspaper that was taken; he had never been able to get half as many as he wanted before. As the revenue would not warrant his being confined to his office, he made a postoffice of his hat; when an anxious letter-seeker found the postmaster, he found the office.

*Response.* Years after, when a lawyer, an agent of the Postoffice Department entered his office one day and asked if Abraham Lincoln was within, adding that he had called to get a little balance due the government from the New Salem postoffice, his friends noticed a shade of perplexity on his face, and one of them said, "Lincoln, if you are in want of money, let me help you." Making no reply, he suddenly rose, pulled out a little, old trunk, and asked the amount. The sum being named, Mr. Lincoln opened the trunk, took out a little package of coin wrapped in a cotton-rag, and counted out the exact amount, — a little more than seventeen dollars. After the agent left, he remarked quietly, "I never use any man's money but my own."

8. He learned and practiced surveying, tried political speech-making with good success, and in 1834 was elected to the legislature.

*Response.* He commenced to study law, but when the time for the opening of the legislature came, he dropped his law-books, shouldered his pack, and went on foot to the capital, a distance of about one hundred miles. At the close of the session he walked back.

9. As a lawyer, and a statesman, he was still "Honest Abe"

*Response.* In 1842 he married Miss Mary Todd, a Kentucky lady.

10. In 1847 he was sent to Congress, and proved himself a master of the great political questions of the day.

*Response.* When he spoke on the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, the

whole house was still as death. All felt that a man of strength was its enemy, and that he intended to blast it if he could by strong and manly efforts. He was most successful, and the close of the speech was greeted with enthusiastic applause.

**11.** In 1858 Mr. Lincoln engaged in a spirited contest against Mr. Douglas for the senatorship. He would, doubtless, have been elected on a popular vote, but the constitution of the Legislature was such that he was defeated. He had, however, been brought prominently before the people, and the way to the presidency had thus been opened.

*Response.* Unfortunately for him, he was introduced to the country as a "rail-splitter," and this fact, though not because of any prejudice against labor, necessarily belittled him in the eyes of people of education and culture. It took years for the country to comprehend the wisdom, truth, gentleness, nobleness, and sagacity of Mr. Lincoln.

**12.** When he received the telegram announcing his nomination to the presidency, as soon as the excitement among his friends around him in the office had somewhat subsided, he rose and saying quietly that there was a "little woman on 8th street" who had some interest in the matter, pocketed the telegram and walked home.

*Response.* Judge Kelly, one of the committee from the convention which officially announced his nomination to Mr. Lincoln, was a very tall man. Mr. Lincoln noticed that the Judge looked at him, up and down, and when the opportunity came, he said, "What is your height?" "Six feet three inches," said the Judge. "What is yours, Mr. Lincoln?" "Six feet four inches," replied Mr. Lincoln. "Then, sir," said the Judge, "Pennsylvania bows to Illinois. My dear man," he continued, "for years my heart has been aching for a president that I could look up to, and I've found him at last in the land where we thought there were none but "little giants."

*Second Response.* The inhabitants of Poland are noted for their height. Some one said to the President, one day, "Mr. Lincoln, you are tall enough to be a Pole." He responded quickly, "I hope it would be a liberty-pole."

**13.** In the summer of '62, after our army had suffered several defeats, Mr. Lincoln prepared the first draft of the Eman-

cipation Proclamation. He was persuaded to delay its announcement until after a victory. At the cabinet meeting immediately following the battle of Antietam, the President declared that it could be delayed no longer, and said: "I made a solemn vow before God that, if General Lee should be driven back from Pennsylvania, I would crown the result by the declaration of freedom to the slave."

*Response.* Many of his later State papers show a touching appreciation of his need of Divine strength. He felt, he said, that he should leave Washington a better man, if not a wiser, from having learned what a very poor sort of man he was. "I have been driven many times to my knees," he once remarked, "by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go. My own wisdom, and that of all about me, seemed insufficient for that day."

**14.** The reëlection of Mr. Lincoln, in 1864, destroyed the last hope of the Rebellion, as it proved the people of the loyal States determined to maintain the integrity of the Union.

*Response.* In the following session of Congress, the Constitutional Amendment abolishing slavery was adopted, greatly to the gratification of the President.

**14.** The night of the 14th of April the President was assassinated in Ford's Theater; J. Wilkes Booth, the assassin, fired a pistol at him, and then leaped upon the stage shouting the State motto of Virginia, "*Sic semper tyrannis!*" and adding, "The South is avenged." In the confusion he escaped.

*Response.* The President was unconscious up to the time of his death, the next morning. Our country has never, save in the death and burial of Garfield, witnessed a scene of such universal sorrow, or a funeral procession extending from the White House to the final resting-place in the West.

#### RECITATION: THE BURIAL OF LINCOLN.

(Edna Dean Proctor.)

Now let the storied Potomac  
Laurels forever divide;  
Now to the Sangamon fameless  
Give of its century's pride:  
Sangamon, queen of the prairies,

Placidly westward that flows,  
 Far in whose valley of silence  
 Calm he has sought his repose.  
 Over our Washington's river  
 Sunrise gleams rosy and fair;  
 Sunset on Sangamon fairer,  
 Father and Martyr sleeps there.

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QUOTATIONS FROM LINCOLN'S SPEECHES AND WORDS.

1. "Let us have faith that right makes might, and, in that faith, let us, to the end, dare to do our duty as we understand it."
2. "I know there is a God, and that He hates injustice and slavery."
3. I am nothing, but truth is everything."
4. The importance for man and beast of the prescribed weekly rest, the sacred rights of Christian soldiers and sailors, a becoming deference to the best sentiment of a Christian people, and a due regard for the Divine Will, demand that Sunday labor in the army and navy be reduced to the measure of strict necessity."
5. "Among freemen there can be no successful appeal from the ballot to the bullet, and they who take such appeal are sure to lose their case and pay the cost."
6. "I am confident that the Almighty has His plans, and will work them out; and, whether we see it or not, they will be the wisest and best for us."
7. "I have never studied the art of paying compliments to women; but I must say that if all that has been said by orators and poets, since the creation of the world, in praise of women, were applied to the women of America, it would not do them justice for their conduct during the war."

RECITATION: LINCOLN.

[From the *London Punch* immediately after the assassination of Lincoln.]

You lay a wreath on murdered Lincoln's bier ?  
 You, who with mocking pencil used to trace  
 Broad for the self-complacent British sneer,  
 His length of shambling limb, his rugged face ;

His gaunt, large hands, his unkempt, bristling hair,  
 His garb uncouth, his bearing ill at ease,  
 His lack of all we prize as debonair,  
 Of art or skill to win, or power to please.

You whose sharp pen backed up the pencil's laugh,  
 Judging each step as if the way were plain,  
 Headless, so it could point its paragraph  
 Of chief's perplexity or people's pain.

Beside this corse, which bears for winding-sheet  
 The stars and stripes he lived to rear anew,  
 Between the mourners at his head and feet,—  
 Say, scurrite jester, is there room for you ?

Yes; he had lived to shame me from my sneer,  
 To lame my pencil and confute my pen ;  
 To make me own this kind of princes, peer,  
 This rail-splitter, a true-born king of men.

My shallow judgment I had planned to rue,  
 Noting how to occasion's height he rose ;  
 How his quaint wit made home-truth seem more true,  
 How, iron-like, his temper grew by blows.

How gentle, yet how hopefah he could be ;  
 How in good fortune or in ill, the same ;  
 Not bitter in success, nor boastful he,  
 Thirsty for gold, nor feverish for fame.

So he grew up, a destined work to do,  
 And lived to do it ! Four long-suffering years,  
 Ill fame, ill feeling, ill report lived through,—  
 And then he heard the hisses change to cheers,

The taunts to tribute, the rebuke to praise,  
 And took both in the same unwavering mood,  
 Till, as he came to light for darksome days,  
 And seemed to touch the goal whereon he stood,

A felon had, between that goal and him,  
 Reached from behind his back, a trigger pressed,  
 And those perplexed and patient eyes were dim,  
 Those gaunt, long-suffering limbs were laid to rest.

The Old World and the New, from sea to sea,  
Utter one voice of sympathy and shame.

Dear heart! so wounded as it first beat high!  
Dear life! so stricken as its triumph came!

A deed accursed! strokes have been struck before  
By the assassin's hand, whereof men doubt  
If more of horror or disgrace they bare;  
But thy foul crime, like Cain's, stands darkly out.

Vile hand that brandest murder on a strife,  
Whate'er its grounds, stoutly and nobly striven;  
And with a martyr's crown crownest a life  
With much to praise, little to be forgiven.









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